Student Financial Assistance Financial Management System

(SFA FMS)

FMS Phase III

Communication Strategy

Table of Contents

1.0   Introduction

SFA's transformation into a performance-based organization is changing processes and functions as well as creating opportunities for employees.   One major area where this will happen is in the area of Financial Management. As SFA moves through its journey towards PBO status, it becomes important to have a strategic, centralized focus on Financial Management. Financial Management spans multiple Channel functions within SFA. The Financial Management System (FMS) Implementation takes SFA further on the path to financial strategic focus, and further towards its goal of becoming a PBO.

It is imperative that SFA employees understand the changes that the implementation of the FMS System will bring and how these changes will affect them. Ultimately, employee ownership of the Financial Management System is needed to successfully implement the transition to an integrated FMS. Employees must be well informed about upcoming project events to reach the level of project ownership.

In order to obtain this level of employee ownership, the FMS team is identifying the type of sponsorship that needs to occur. Three types of users have been identified in the *Stakeholder Analysis*. These users included:

- Executive
- Management
- End-User Level.

FMS Communications will document the questions that Executive and Management-Level users will need to deliver in order to obtain ownership. Furthermore, FMS communications will document the questions that Management and End-Users will need to answer. Employees need to know what FMS is, why it is being implemented, and how it impacts them (*these questions are identified in the FMS **Key Messages** document*).

2.0   FMS

FMS, an Oracle Federal Financial System, manages the flow of all financial information across all of SFA. It will facilitate SFA's transformation by giving the CFO office the ability to report information across programs, consolidate redundant processes, and account for SFA grant and loan financial transactions.

Additionally, overall costs will be lowered by allowing 6000 schools, 4000 lenders, the states, and 36 guaranty agencies to operate on-line, reducing the need for paper-based transactions. FMS offers a single accounting system that enables financial accountability and auditability.

During Phase III, the SFA Organization has begun to design systems that are focused on its primary business functions, which allow for minimized system redundancy, reduced cost, and (with proper coordination) improved systems integration.   SFA Is focusing on incorporating core accounting for each of the remaining loan and grant programs including Direct Loan, Campus Based, PELL, Lender Payments and Debt Collection.

Impacted Areas internal to SFA

- Department of Education OCFO (As SFA's PBO status requires an independently controlled and managed Accounting and Financial Operation)

- Schools Channel (Some accounting functions currently performed for the Campus Based and Pell Programs will be centrally controlled in FMS)

- Students Channel (Some accounting functions currently performed for the Direct Loan and DCS Program will be centrally controlled in FMS)

- Financial Partner's Channel (Some accounting functions currently performed for the FFEL program and the LEAPP/SLEAPP program will be centrally controlled in FMS)

Impacted Areas external to SFA

- State Agencies (Phase III)

- Students (Phase IV)

- Schools (Phase IV)

- Lenders (Phase IV)

Proposed Venues for Delivering Messages

- Road Shows: One per channel, with CFO and Channel GM Attendance

- Road Show Follow-Up Summary Postcards

- Design Meetings with FMS, CFO, and Channel Program Developer Attendance

- All Hands Meeting Before Key Release Dates for FMS, CFO, Channel Program

Internal Audience Needs

SFA employees will need to understand the changes that the implementation of FMS will bring and how these changes will affect them. Ultimately, employee ownership of the system is needed to successfully implement the transition to an integrated FMS. Employees must be well informed about upcoming project events to reach this level of project ownership.
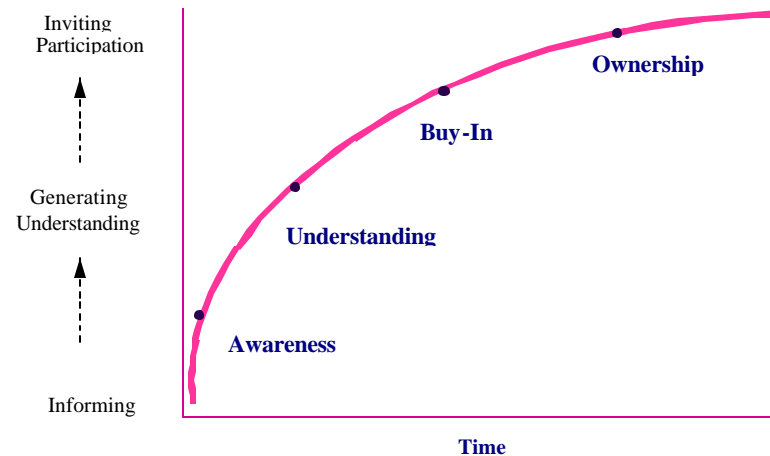
Change Commitment Curve

The Change Commitment Curve (illustrated above) helps establish the content, timing, and target stakeholder groups for the planned communications vehicles. A level of *understanding* is reached when they can explain the changes. The *buy-in* level is only reached when they agree with the planned changes and begin to positively convince others. Finally, *ownership* is achieved when the stakeholder members take responsibility for the changes and feel they have a vested interest in a successful implementation.

In order to help employees embrace the level of ownership that is required for a successful implementation, the *FMS Phase III Communication Strategy* is intended to serve as a blueprint for communication through implementation. The other components of the *Strategy* include the *Stakeholder Analysis (Appendix A)*, the *Vehicle Analysis (Appendix B)*, and the *Detailed Communication Plan (Appendix C)*. The *Stakeholder Analysis* identifies who the key stakeholders (audiences) are during Phase III. The *Vehicle Analysis* assesses potential communication vehicles within each stakeholder group. Both of these documents will provide input into the *Detailed Communication Plan*, which is intended to serve as a plan to outline the frequency of messages, the communication vehicles that will be used to deliver messages, the target audience groups, the key purpose of each message, the "timing" of each message and the developer and sender of each message.   This plan supports change through the use of effective communication vehicles that educate and motivate SFA employees to take ownership of FMS.

Objectives

The objectives of the communication effort for Phase III of the SFA FMS Project are the following:

⇒ To help individuals prepare for, understand and accept changes in their work environment
⇒ To inform and involve all affected groups whose commitment will be needed
⇒ To provide accurate information to keep stakeholders focused, reduce rumors and performance dips
⇒ To build realistic expectations regarding FMS impacts and benefits
⇒ To gain business ownership of FMS through user involvement in design, development and implementation
⇒ To provide timely information, which is appropriately tailored for various stakeholder groups
⇒ To participate in two-way, open and honest communication
⇒ To understand what they can do to help achieve the desired organizational goals and how to take action in this direction
⇒ To support, coach, and empower others to achieve project goals
⇒ To hear a consistent, positive message via an identified Communication Liaison
⇒ To sustain interest and energy of team members and business representatives who are involved with the FMS project

3.0   Approach

The stakeholders impacted (*See Stakeholder Analysis*) by the implementation of Phase III programs are large, varied and geographically dispersed. Consequently, communication to these groups will be more general and broad in scope. Key stakeholders (Identified in the *Stakeholder Analysis*) who will experience the greatest impact from the Phase III implementation will receive the most focused communication.

Our approach is to specify what information should be delivered and when, considering the concerns, interests and level of participation of the stakeholder. The goal is to create effective communication without overwhelming or confusing stakeholder groups. The *Detailed Communication Plan* takes advantage of existing SFA FMS communication vehicles (general) and media (specific) where possible.

Critical Success Factors

The critical success factors outlined below were identified as Lessons Learned during Phase II of the SFA FMS project. These factors need to be carefully considered when implementing communications throughout Phase III.

- Have one point of contact for all user communication. Early on in the process during II, there were several communication points-of-contact. Many of the communication issues have been solved since the FMS Hotline was established. In the future, a single point of contact should be communicated early on in the process.
  ⇒ This point of contact will be identified in the *Stakeholder Analysis*.

- Communicate early and often through various vehicles (website, email, phone calls, etc.).
  ⇒ The *Detailed Communication Plan* will identify the type of communication vehicles (general) and media (specific) that will be utilized
  ⇒ The *Vehicle Analysis* will identify the advantages and disadvantages of available communication vehicles.

- Develop a communication matrix to ensure the right messages are sent to the right people in a timely manner. If the issue is technical in nature, communication needs to go to the technical staff. If the communication is functionally related, the communication should go to business contacts.
  ⇒ The *Detailed Communication Plan* will identify timely messages tailored to the appropriate audience.

Roles and Responsibilities

The FMS Communications Team is responsible for coordinating Phase III SFA FMS communications. The team will coordinate with the Communication Liaison identified in the *Stakeholder Analysis* to ensure that communications are being delivered. The FMS Communications Team will draft messages for the Executive Level Sponsors, but first present messages to Project Leadership for approval. Furthermore, the FMS Communications Team recommends that Management and End-Users use the *Key Messages* document to draft communications.

5/20/2002

4.0   Target Audience

The people affected by the project, or target audience group members, are the drivers of the *Detailed Communication Plan*. The Plan is developed to ensure that we reach each of these audience groups, within Phase III, with appropriate messages. Therefore, messages are created based on their information needs. Each target audience is identified in the *Stakeholder Analysis*.

Stakeholders

In order to develop appropriate Communications, *a Stakeholder Analysis* needs to be developed to determine and understand stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders are those individuals impacted by the Phase III SFA FMS initiative, including:
- ⇒ State Agencies
- ⇒ LEAP Financial Partner Office
- ⇒ CFO Accounting
- ⇒ ED Accounting
- ⇒ CFO Financial Reporting
- ⇒ Congress
- ⇒ Treasury
- ⇒ Pell and Debt Collection Contractors
- ⇒ Debt Collection Services
- ⇒ Direct Loan Operations
- ⇒ Regions
- ⇒ Campus Based Operations
- ⇒ Campus Based Systems
- ⇒ Pell Operations
- ⇒ Pell Systems
- ⇒ Case Management
- ⇒ Inspector General

5/20/2002

Other individuals and organizations affected by the changes will also be included as stakeholders.

In order to determine the appropriate communications, the *Stakeholder Analysis* was developed to determine and understand stakeholder groups. The information gathered in the *Stakeholder Analysis* regarding each stakeholder group's characteristics and attributes, concerns and preferred communication methods serves as the foundation for the *Detailed Communication Plan*.

Key Messages

Key messages are the major themes of communication activities and are specific to one or more stakeholder group. Messages address stakeholder concerns and aim to achieve awareness, understanding, acceptance and commitment. Key messages will change through the design and implementation phases. In order for the SFA FMS Project to facilitate effective communication, key messages will:

- Discuss the purpose or expected outcome of the project,
- Discuss user support (ie: training, help desk, etc),
- Discuss the benefits,
- Dispel rumors to provide "real" facts,
- Provide messages of assurance, advocacy and guidance, and
- Provide news and updates on major project milestones.

Each audience group within the Phase III SFA FMS implementation will require a core set of clearly defined messages to be communicated. The core set of messages can be developed and refined based on the intended audience (i.e., the level of detail or the number of messages communicated may vary depending upon audience requirements). Messages must be continually developed and refined throughout Phase III as different audience needs arise.

Furthermore, in order to move stakeholders from a level of understanding to a level of commitment, where stakeholders feel a sense of ownership and "buy-in" to the changes that are impacting them, the following questions will need to be answered. FMS Communications will answer the questions below and craft the initial message or initial themes for Executive-Level Users and recommend that Management and End-Users answer these questions when delivering communications.

FMS Communication Strategy

Awareness Topics

⇒ What is FMS?
⇒ Why is the SFA FMS project occurring?
⇒ What are the project benefits?
⇒ How does FMS fit into the PBO?
⇒ What is the project timeline?
⇒ Who is involved in the project?
⇒ What is Mod Partner?
⇒ How will I get information on the project ("Did you know…" topics, updates, etc.)?
⇒ Who do I contact with my questions?

Understanding Topics

⇒ Understanding the big picture - Where are we and where are we going?
⇒ Project update – Key milestones?
⇒ What are the FMS spotlights?
⇒ What are the key processes and members?
⇒ What can I expect of FMS?
⇒ How does FMS affect me?
⇒ What are the Current vs. Future process changes?
⇒ How will we identify and communicate the impact to your job?
⇒ Training update - How will I find out if and when I need to be trained?
⇒ How will FMS impact our customers?

Acceptance/Buy-In Topics

⇒ Project update – When is the Implementation phase?
⇒ What are the rollout activities?
⇒ What are the top job impacts?
⇒ Can I explain how FMS affects me to others?
⇒ What the sponsor is doing to ensure a successful implementation?

5/20/2002

⇒ Training update – Do you have the Go-Live Checklist?

Commitment Topics

⇒ What are the Acceptance assessment results?
⇒ Training Update - Metrics
⇒ What are the key issues and resolutions?
⇒ What are the key accomplishments?
⇒ What are the next steps?

5.0 Vehicles and Media

Different vehicles are appropriate for different audiences and messages, therefore a variety of communication vehicles are essential for reaching employees at all levels. Communication vehicles are the means by which messages are transmitted to or received from the organization.   Media are the specific vehicles that will be used to deliver a message (e.g. a newsletter is a vehicle, while the *InStep* Newsletter is the media). The successful implementation of communication vehicles can deepen stakeholder understanding of FMS events and initiatives. The Plan specifies purposes for communication events in more detail.

Vehicles can be interactive (person-to-person), technology based, written or encompass other creative approaches.

The analysis outlines vehicle characteristics, the size of the distribution audience, the frequency of the distribution, the cost to produce the vehicle, the lead-time needed to produce the vehicle, and the advantages and disadvantages of each vehicle. This information will provide input into the *Detailed Communication Plan*.

6.0   Stakeholder Analysis Overview

The *Stakeholder Analysis* is a table that identifies Phase III FMS stakeholders.   The table contains 6 subjects or rows, each answering a specific question.

	Subject	Question Addressed
1	**Location**	Where is this stakeholder group located geographically?
2	**Stakeholder Group**	To whom will the messages be sent? Audience members can influence others based on the messages received. Appropriate audience members are based on information need and message communicated.
3	**Membership**	Who makes up this Stakeholder Group? What are the names of the individuals that comprise this group?
4	**Organization**	What part of the SFA organization is this Stakeholder group from?
5	**Size**	How many people make up this Stakeholder Group?
6	**Communication Methods**	What communication vehicle do these stakeholders use and prefer?

5/20/2002

7.0 Vehicle Analysis Overview

The *Vehicle Analysis* is a table that identifies the advantages and disadvantages of different vehicles. The table contains 9 subjects or rows, each answering a specific question.

	Subject	Question Addressed
1	**Vehicle**	What types of communication vehicles could be used to communicate messages to the target audience?
2	**Description**	What type of vehicle is this? Is it face-to-face, paper-based, or a technology-based vehicle? What is the purpose of this vehicle?
3	**Group Size**	How many people will interact with the vehicle?
4	**Frequency**	How often will the vehicle be presented, distributed, or used?
5	**Distribution**	Who is the audience that will receive the message?
6	**Cost**	What is the cost involved in producing this vehicle in general terms? eg: high, medium, or low
7	**Lead Time**	How much time is needed to prepare to deliver this vehicle? eg: high, medium, or low

5/20/2002

8	Advantages	What are the advantages of this vehicle? eg: Is it an existing vehicle; quick to distribute, efficient, a consistent message, fast, high impact, low cost, etc.
9	Disadvantages	What are the disadvantages of this vehicle? eg: Is it difficult to target specific audiences, a high cost, not accountable, time consuming, low response rate, etc.

8.0   Detailed Communication Plan Overview

The *FMS Phase III Detailed Communication Plan* (there is one plan for each program area: LEAPP/SLEAPP, Pell, Campus-Based, Direct Loan, and Debt Collection) is a table that outlines methods for gaining project ownership with communication tools and techniques. The Plan contains 5 subjects or rows, each answering a specific question.

	Subject	**Question Addressed**
1	**Communication Vehicle**	Through which instrument (s) will the message be delivered? The methods or channels used in the communication process to deliver messages are called, "vehicles." They are often: events or meetings, verbal communication channels, and non-verbal or written media.
2	**Message/Purpose**	What is the purpose of the message? This is a strategic decision since messages can: • Influence • Change audience attitude or beliefs regarding the effects of the Project • Inform • Enhance audience understanding of Project changes and major project • Direct milestones by providing them with timely and accurate information

	• Collect information	• Determine audience thoughts or behaviors regarding change. Establish effective channels of two-way communication to support development and implementation of changes.
3 **Timing**	How often should the message (s) be sent? The rate at which messages are sent should also be timed according to audience information needs.	
4 **Audiences**	Who are the impacted stakeholders?	
5 **Sender/Presenter**	Who will send the message? The body of the message must contain correct and pertinent information. The Sender/Presenter should work with the Subject Matter Expert to develop an accurate message.	